

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 were pending and considered. Claims 1-9 were rejected. In response, claims 1, 2 and 3 have been amended. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-9 remain pending.

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 and 6-8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,228,477 (Klare et al.). In response, claims 1, 2 and 3 have been amended.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-4 and 6-8 now recite an invention patentable over the teaching of Klare et al. and should be allowed. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Klare et al. discloses a porous membrane structure and method. It is described for use as a “technical fabric” for demanding applications such as filter elements, outerwear garments, tents, sleeping bags, protective garments, clean room garments, surgical drapes, surgical gowns and other types of barrier wear (column 12, lines 1-5). A composite membrane 12 includes a membrane 16 that is porous (preferably microporous) and is preferably made of expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (ePTFE). The laminated fabric 10 permits moisture vapor transmission at a rate sufficient to allow a wearer to remain dry and comfortable even when perspiring. Fabric 10 is resistant to liquid and wind penetration while being air permeable (column 4, lines 12-34). The fabric is treated with an oleophobic fluoropolymer. The fabric is made up of nodes 22 and fibrils 24. A coating 28 adheres to the nodes and fibrils that define pores 26. The small-capillary like pores 26 fluidly communicate with environments adjacent to opposite sides of the membrane (column 5, lines 62-67). The oleophobic coating imparts a relatively low surface energy to the ePTFE membrane so that the relative contact angle of most challenge liquids, oils and contaminating agents is greater than 90°. One suitable polymeric oleophobic coating is an

acrylic based polymer containing fluorocarbon side chains, such as Zonyl from Dupont (column 6, lines 21-24). The fabric taught by Klare et al. is one in which the loss of resistance to liquid penetration is minimized (column 7, lines 30-31). A coalesced oleophobic fluoropolymer such as an acrylic based polymer with fluorocarbon side chains is used (column 7, lines 66-67). As summarized best in the two paragraphs beginning at the top of column 12, the fabric or membrane is resistant to wind and liquid penetration yet remains moisture vapor transmissive and air permeable.

In contrast to the teaching of Klare et al., claim 1 as amended recites:

a continuous belt having a predetermined permeability;
 a pair of longitudinal edge portions on said belt; and
 a semipermeable portion ... positioned on said belt between said pair of longitudinal edge portions,
 ... wherein said semipermeable portion is both gas and liquid permeable, and has a total permeability greater than zero and less than about five CFM per square foot as measured by TAPPI test method TIP 0404-20.

Applicant submits that such an invention is neither taught by nor obvious from the teaching of Klare et al, and provides advantages over the prior art.

Klare et al. discloses permeability of 1.21 CFM as measured by the Frasier Air Permeability Tester. Klare et al discloses permeability to air. Klare et al. specifically discloses that the fabric is substantially water impermeable. Klare et al. does not disclose a continuous belt having edge portions and a semipermeable portion between the edge portions, with the semipermeable portion being both gas and liquid permeable. The fabric of Klare et al. is only gas permeable and liquid impermeable. The present invention, as recited in claim 1, provides end portions and a gas and liquid permeable portion therebetween. These are structural differences over the teaching of Klare et al. Accordingly, the present invention provides a continuous belt that can be used in a pressing apparatus to aid in seal edges of a chamber and still facilitate water

removal from the chamber. The present invention can effect both a predetermined flow through and a mechanical pressing force on a continuous web. Accordingly, Applicant is of the opinion claim 1 recites an invention neither taught by nor suggested by Klare et al. and should be allowed.

Claims 2 and 3 have been amended to be consistent with the recitation of total permeability in claim 1. Claims 2 and 3 each depend from claim 1 and therefore include all of the limitations thereof while adding further specificity to the invention recited in claim 1. Accordingly it is respectfully submitted that claims 2 and 3 as amended should be allowed together with claim 1.

Claims 4 and 6-8 each depend directly or indirectly from amended claim 1 and therefore include all of the limitations thereof while adding further specificity to the invention recited therein. Since claim 1 is believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above, it is respectfully submitted that claims 4 and 6-8 also should be allowed together with claim 1.

Claims 5 and 9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klare et al. Claims 1-9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klare et al. In response claims 1, 2 and 3 have been amended. Accordingly, Applicant is of the opinion that claims 1-9 recite an invention not obvious from the teaching of Klare et al and having advantages over the prior art. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

As discussed above with respect to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, Klare et al. discloses a fabric that is air permeable, but water impermeable. In contrast, the present invention as recited in claim 1 is a continuous belt with a semipermeable portion between two edge portions. The semipermeable portion is both gas and liquid permeable and has a specified total permeability. Accordingly, for reasons similar to those stated above, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-9 are not obvious from the teaching of Klare et al. and should be allowed.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claims. The pending claims are therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of the claims.

In the event Applicant has overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicant hereby conditionally petitions therefor and authorizes that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,


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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: MS Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on: July 25, 2005.

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